

United Nations Forum on Forests

**Sustainable Forest Management in the Information Society
- Partnerships for Sharing the Benefits of Knowledge -**

**A message from the Coordinator and Head of the UNFF Secretariat to
the World Summit on the Information Society**

Introduction

Building the information society is a thorough commitment to equally share the benefits of information using all the available media. Information society recognises also the fact, that there is a way to go before information turns into knowledge, learning and innovations, which benefit the society in terms of more efficient technology, educated people, reducing poverty and improving the quality of environment, among numerous other things. Furthermore, there are several obstacles along the way to information society. Illiteracy, health problems and poverty in all its forms may harness the full materialization of the benefits of information and communication technology.

Equitable sharing of the benefits of science, technology and knowledge can alleviate many of these obstacles, but it requires an integrated and holistic approach. Also the nature of interventions in information sharing must be carefully evaluated. Taken these two principles, it is of crucial importance that information and knowledge are seen as necessary ingredients in development and the progress towards the information society is recognized as an integral component of the overall development policy. Information and communication technologies are means, not the ultimate outcomes, and therefore they concern all the sectors of the society equally and altogether.

The Secretariat of UNFF has recognised the power of knowledge and, within its mandate, is urging an equitable sharing of forest related information and environmentally sound technologies as means to promote sustainable forest management. The UNFF Secretariat sees the World Summit on the Information Society as a unique possibility to seek synergies and join forces to achieve equitable sharing of the benefits of knowledge and ensure that production, sharing and dissemination of information is an inseparable element in a world described in the Millennium Development Goals.

Principles

The draft Declaration of Principles and Draft Action Plan for WSIS define a thorough, yet challenging, but assuredly necessary concept for an information society. Those documents, reinforced by valuable and wide contributions, certainly prepare a way toward a successful and efficient World Summit on the Information Society. From its own viewpoint, the UNFF Secretariat wants to use this important opportunity it has been given to contribute to this common effort, referring to the Proposals for Action of Intergovernmental Panel on Forests and Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IPF/IFF) and declarations of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, which stated, for example, that:

IFF/IPF Proposals for Action, No. 144. The forum urged international and regional organizations and governing bodies of instruments to support forest programmes and to integrate forest-related aspects in programmes aimed at poverty alleviation, decreasing population pressures, promoting food security and promoting environmental awareness.

World Summit on Sustainable development, 45 (a). Enhance political commitment to achieve sustainable forest management by endorsing it as a priority on the international political agenda, taking full account of the linkages between the forest sector and other sectors through integrated approaches.

The UNFF Secretariat wishes to draw attention to the following few principles:

- In information society all the efforts to strive equitable sharing of information are culturally sensitive, stemming from user needs, and recognize differences in development levels globally, regionally and locally and make full use of all means of information dissemination in reducing the knowledge gap.
- Along the way towards information society, the national, regional and local capacity building is essential in creating sustainable resources to produce, use and disseminate information to promote sustainable development.
- Information sharing is an important means, not a goal itself, and touches upon all the sectors of the society, all the efforts to eradicate poverty and promote sustainable development, and is an integral element in overall development policy.

Actions

In line with the principles, the UNFF Secretariat wishes to emphasise the following actions:

- Information and knowledge sharing should be integrated in programmes aimed at poverty alleviation and sustainable development as a necessary instrument to achieving Millennium Development Goals and actions should be taken to give information and knowledge sharing an inseparable status in overall development policy framework.
- Along with mainstreaming of knowledge sharing, the obstacles for the sharing of the benefits of knowledge should be identified and integrated into the strategy towards information society, including illiteracy, lack of technology, poverty and health problems, among other things.
- The synergies between organisations, countries and initiatives should be actively searched and promoted in efforts aiming at equitable sharing of the benefits of knowledge, making the best use of existing initiatives, networks and partnerships.
- In information society, coordination and partnerships within countries and international organizations and instruments should be effectively used as a means of building the capacity in developing countries for collection, review, synthesis and utilisation of information.

With these lines, the UNFF Secretariat wishes the best of success for the World Summit on the Information Society in its important effort.